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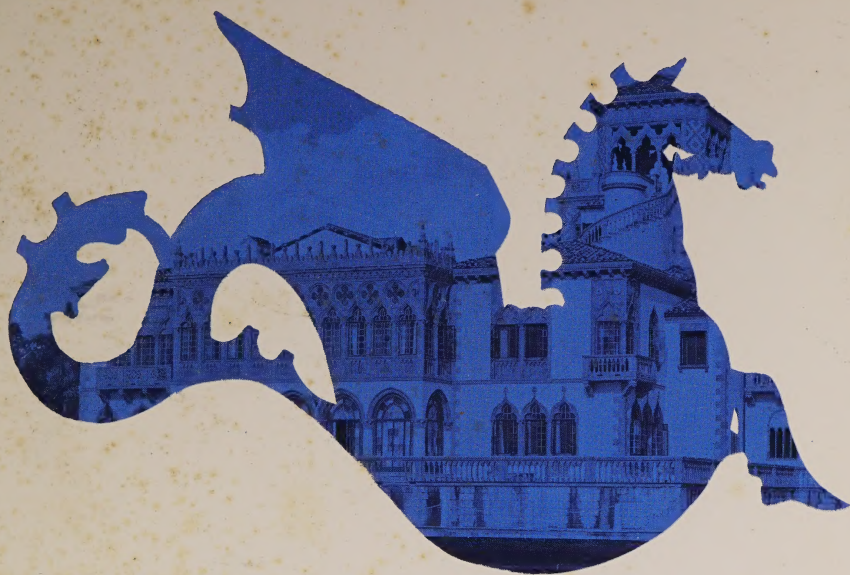


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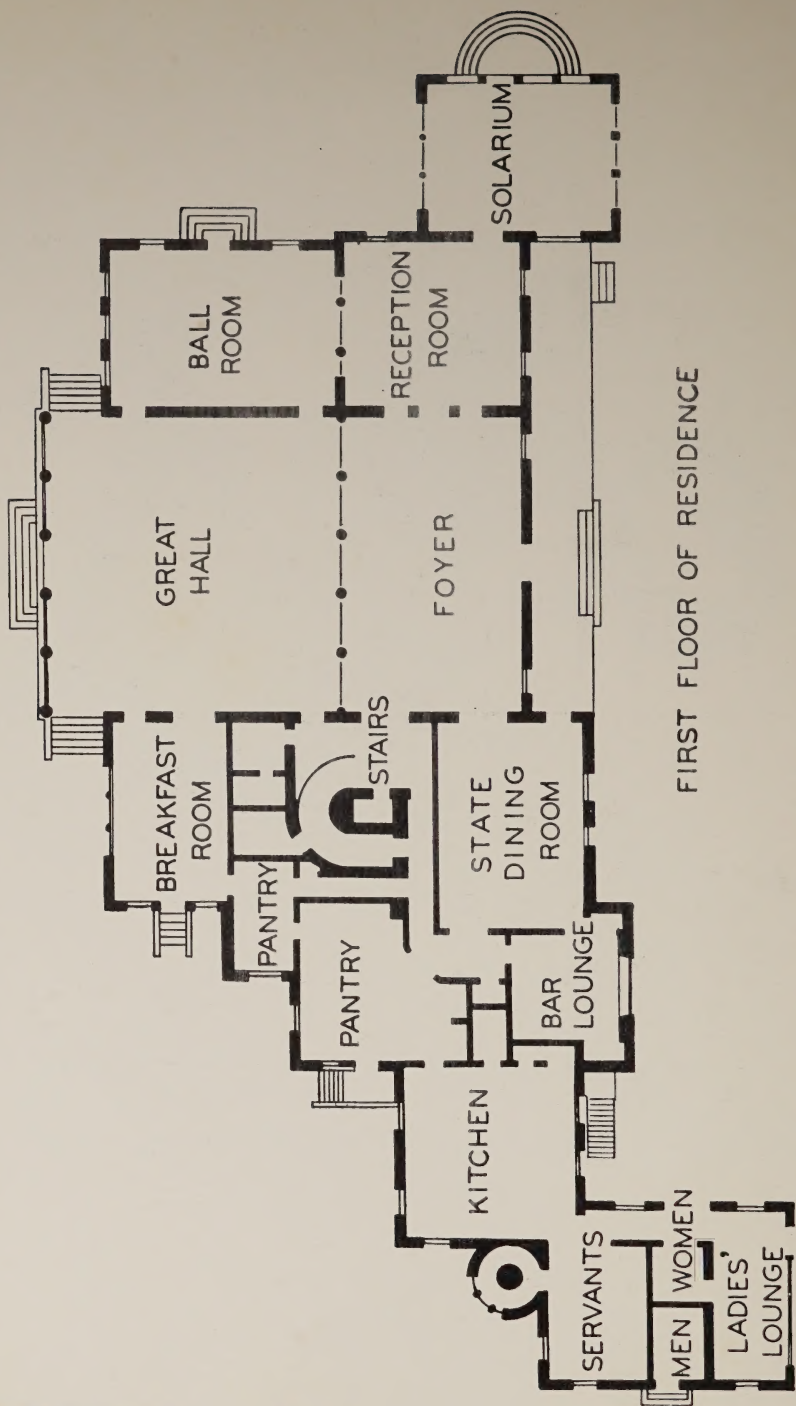
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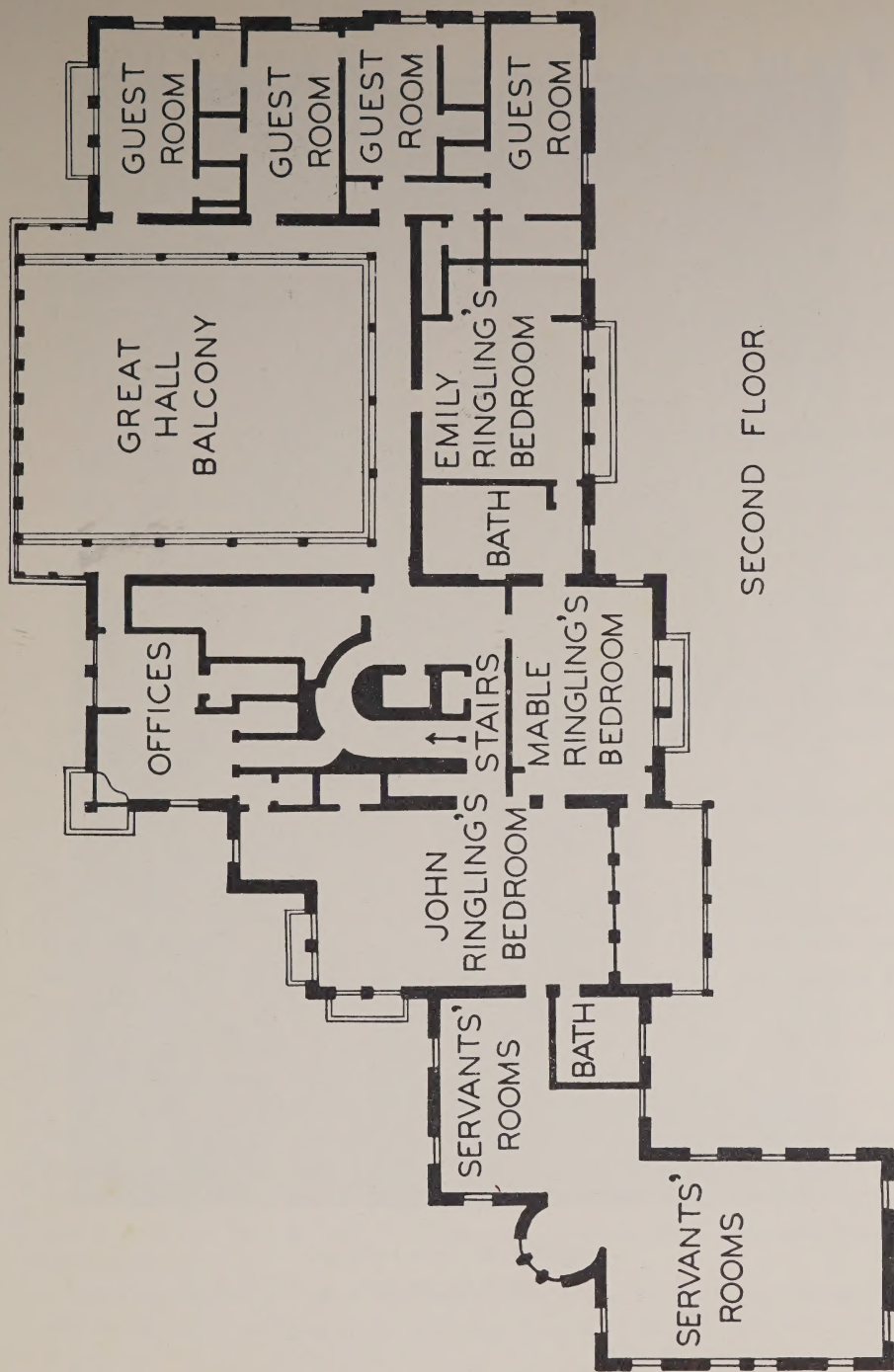


CA'D'ZAN: RINGLING RESIDENCE  
RINGLING MUSEUM                      SARASOTA, FLORIDA



FIRST FLOOR OF RESIDENCE





SECOND FLOOR



PORTRAIT OF JOHN RINGLING  
by Savely Sorine

# THE HOUSE THAT JOHN AND MABLE RINGLING BUILT

## *A Short Guide to the Ringling Residence*

A few hundred feet north of the entrance to the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, there is a picturesque gateway of pinkish stucco and brown ashlar masonry, framed by engaged colonettes of glazed tile. It bears the legend, "Ca' d' Zan," indicating that it gives access to the House of John (*Zan* in Venetian dialect)—the dwelling of John Ringling. Massive wrought iron gates are invitingly open.

### THE GATE HOUSE

This entrance to the superbly landscaped grounds stretching to Sarasota Bay, a quarter mile to the west, is in reality a lodge gate with apartments for a gatekeeper. Nowadays, it is there that one obtains tickets of admission to the grounds, to the Museum of the American Circus, and to Ca' d' Zan itself.

John Ringling's mansion, officially known as the Ringling Residence (built in 1925-1926), the Museum of the Circus (erected in 1948), and the Museum of Art (dedicated in January, 1930), as well as several smaller buildings, stand on the 37-acre tract he willed to the people of Florida at his death in 1936.

### EXOTIC LANDSCAPING

When you step beyond the hedges and walls dividing the grounds from the public highway that runs 500 yards west of the Tamiami Trail, you have passed into a world in which the Ringlings paid nostalgic homage to the Italy they dearly loved. Everywhere, the eye is met by the most exotically beautiful of Florida trees, shrubbery and flowers. But, among the palms, banyans, live oaks and hibiscus, the bougainvillea, poinsettias and oleanders, can be seen hundreds of sculptured figures that came from far away Venice.

Lining the curving drive, a host of beguiling *putti*, or cupids, point the way, while elsewhere amusing grotesques and a variety of half or full-length garden figures are framed by the foliage. Special accents are provided now and again by large urns along the drives, and here and there are Italian terra cotta oil jars as well as fragments of sculptural and architectural ornament.

As you reach the Circus Museum on the right, the main avenue straightens out to afford a view, at the end of a long vista, of the impressive Ca' d'

Zan towering into the sunny sky. Farther on, the drive divides and encircles a horseshoe-shaped lawn which, in turn elaborately planted, frames the marble swimming-pool. Twin sphinxes of lead closely guard a walk that follows the central axis of the lawn, to the far end, where the palace itself rises, in Venetian Gothic grandeur. Its broad mass is surmounted by a square tower encircled by an exterior staircase spiraling to the top. An extensive view of Sarasota Bay stretching on toward the west, to join the Gulf of Mexico, is afforded from this pinnacle.

## **A MASTER DESIGN**

In order to make landscape adaptations, necessitated by changing conditions, a master design was created in 1952 for the entire estate by F. B. Stresau, landscape architect of Fort Lauderdale. This was commissioned by the Florida State Board of Control, which in 1946 was placed in authority over the property John Ringling had willed to the State. From time to time, new drives are being constructed, new parking areas are being set aside, new vistas are being cut through—all in accordance with the Stresau Plan, and in keeping with what is felt to have been John Ringling's underlying intention.

In spirit, the Ringling Residence was a fitting background for a man whose whole life was a manifestation of the spectacular and the dramatic. According to estimates made by the architect, Dwight James Baum, the building itself cost approximately a million dollars, and about \$250,000 additional for the seawall, swimming pool, and other structures on the grounds. It is believed that the furnishings, exclusive of paintings, cost John Ringling another \$400,000. The result was the fabulous embodiment of a dream of luxury, elegance and grandeur, placed in the loveliest setting imaginable.

## **LAND ACQUIRED IN 1912**

The land on which the Residence stands was purchased by John Ringling in 1912, the year after he had paid his first visit to Sarasota. First he built a seawall; then the landscaping was begun. On the bay front site of the present Residence stood a comparatively modest house, in which the Ringlings first lived during several months of each year for more than a decade. Eventually it was moved back into the grounds to make way for the new palace, and was torn down several years ago.

That palace is called the House of John, but it owes its existence perhaps even more to Mrs. Ringling than to her husband. In its larger aspects, it was conceived by Mable Ringling, and the original, greatly detailed sketch plans were made, according to her ideas and under her supervision, by Thomas R. Martin, a Sarasota architect. The great house, as it now stands, was developed largely by Dwight James Baum of New York.

At the beginning, Frank C. Martin, as a young architect working in his father's office, did much of the drawing.

In 1923, when the Ringlings had just returned from Italy (where they had acquired a great many sculptures and other objects of art as a result of their new impulse toward collecting), Mrs. Ringling went to the Martin offices in Sarasota, and announced that she intended to build a palatial home. Her husband, it became evident, would be satisfied with "just a little bit of a place;" but she wanted something more magnificent, to be built in a style that would remind her of Italy, and especially of Venice—the city they both loved most of all.



PORTRAIT OF MABLE RINGLING

by Savely Sorine

From her trunks she had unpacked all manner of photographs and brochures, and sketches she had commissioned from Italian artists. Mr. Martin recalls that they were carried around in an oilcloth brief case, and were so precious in her estimation that she would not leave them in the studio, but just showed them and put them back. She had already made up her mind that she wanted something richly ornate. Moreover, she was most specific about the details.

## VENICE AND MADISON SQUARE

It appeared from the outset that she wanted a palace that would incorporate features of various structures which, for one reason or another, appealed to her. The original Madison Square Garden, owned by John Ringling (where the circus appeared in New York) was one of these. Stanford White, its architect, and an intimate of Ringling's, had succeeded in merging into its total effect certain aspects of the Doge's Palace in Venice. Mrs. Ringling now insisted that the west facade of her new home should resemble that renowned structure. It is obvious that she was thinking of New York as well as Venice, for she wished to have, as the crowning feature of her Sarasota mansion, a tower similar to that rising above the roof-line of the old Garden. It was in this tower that White had had his famous studio;



Seen from the Air  
THE BAY FACADE OF THE RESIDENCE

and there too the Madison Square Garden Club, of which he and Mr. Ringling were members, had held its meetings.

Mr. Martin and his associates protested, fearing that the result would be unfortunate. They finally, however, drew the plans as she wished. The son of the architect now recalls that she "sat on our drafting table for months, telling us just how she wanted it." It was only after Mr. Ringling himself had decided that it would be too costly to execute the plans drawn by the Sarasota architects that Mr. Baum was commissioned to create a scheme acceptable to him. Among the changes made was elimination of the Madison Square Garden tower and substitution of the one that is now the central feature of the Ca' d' Zan.

Even before a real start had been made on plans for the building, Mrs. Ringling had conceived the idea of having Willy Pogany, popular Hungarian illustrator, stage designer and mural painter, devise a ceiling in which

she and her husband with their friends would appear in Venetian carnival attire. She had been enchanted by a similar ceiling in some Italian palace. After the house was finished, Pogany painted for her not one ceiling but two—the *Carnival* for the gaming room, and the *Dances of the Nations* for the ballroom.

## COLORFUL EFFECTS

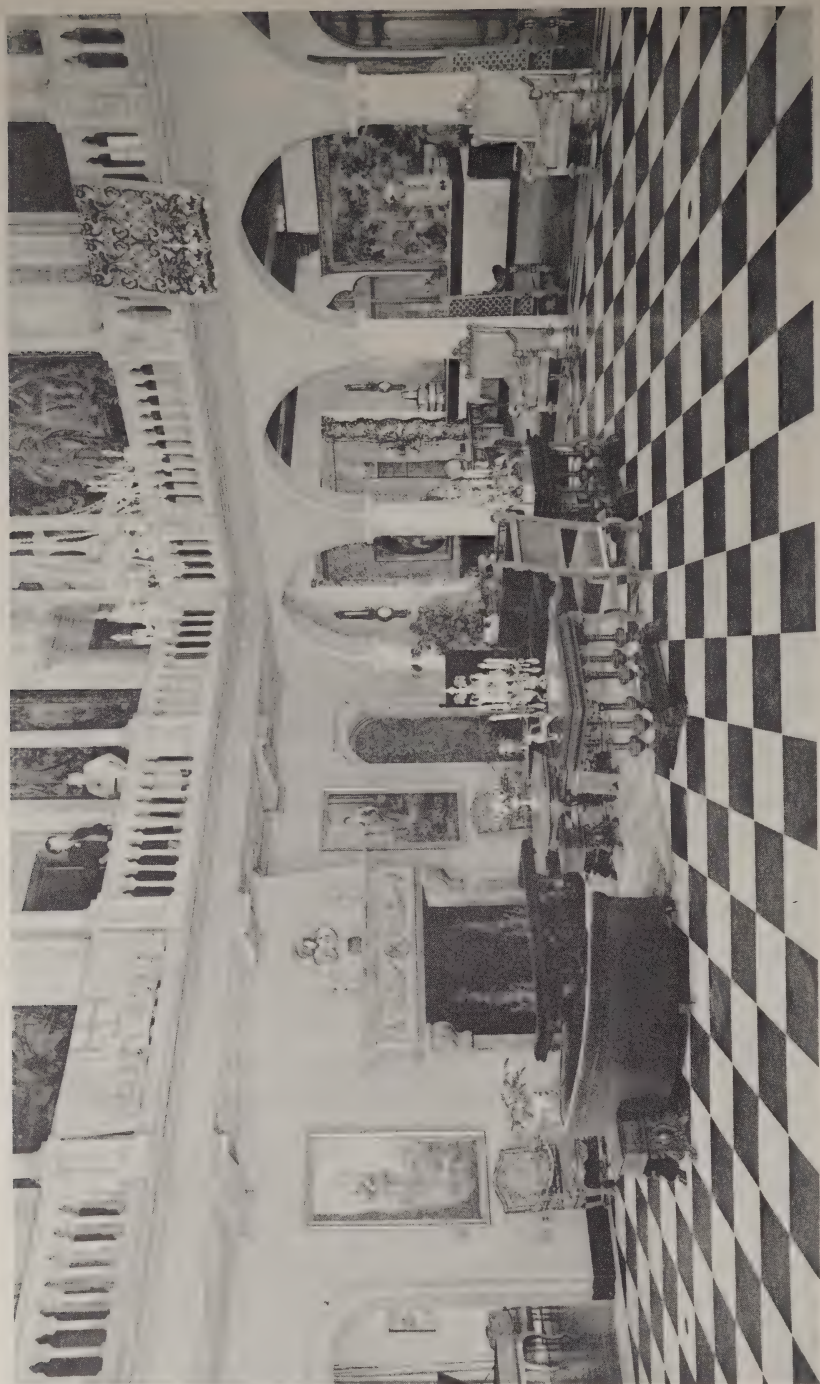
In thinking of her new house, she considered even the smaller details, such as the service yard on the south side where the main motifs reflect those on a house she had seen on the Grand Canal.

When it came to the actual construction, Mr. Baum was faced with the problem of materials that could be adapted to the complex Venetian Gothic style under the brilliant sun of Florida. His search for colorful effects led him to choose a rose cream stucco accented by glazed terra cotta medallions and mouldings, with corbels supporting the balconies and cornices. These elements were painted in soft red, yellow, green, blue and ivory, then glazed and baked to give the effect of fine faience. Cast stone forms the tracery of the ogival windows. German formosa marble of a subtly purple cast appears in the terrace and steps of the main entrance, and the fan-shaped approach to the north door. In wide vertical areas framing the tower windows, terra cotta tiles of buff and reddish brown are arranged in a diaper pattern, while ashlar masonry of similar stones veneers the base of the tower and frames the main entrance to the house.

## TILES FROM BARCELONA

From Barcelona in Spain came the thousands of old red barrel tiles that complete the roof of the Residence, and that of the Museum of Art as well. There is a story that Mr. Ringling happened to be in Barcelona at a time when the streets were being widened and many buildings torn down. Asked if he would like to buy the tiles from the razed houses, he assented with enthusiasm. The tiles are said to have filled two boats, one of which sailed to Miami, the other to Tampa. In those days, shiploads of treasures were always arriving for the Ringlings. But there were more tiles than even John Ringling could use. Thomas Martin and other Sarasotans bought them for their houses, and thousands more still lie beside a driveway on the estate.

The house is two hundred feet long. The tower, over the dining room area, reaches a height of sixty-one feet above the ground level, and terminates in a balcony surrounding an open kiosk. In Mr. Ringling's time a light shining there at night could be seen for miles around. The terrace lies below, approximately two hundred feet long and forty feet wide.



THE GREAT HALL

Thirteen steps of English veined marble lead down to a landing platform. The pavement of the terrace itself, of imported and domestic marble in many colors, is laid in a chevron pattern. Terra cotta balustrades with glazed cream-colored railings edge the terrace and steps. Eight columns, veneered with Mexican onyx brought from Southern California, support the rounded arches of the terrace facade, which emphasizes its derivation from the Doge's Place. This central section, projecting somewhat from the main mass of the building, reveals on the exterior the two-storied space within.

## VENETIAN GLASS

Throughout the Ca' d' Zan, the window panes are of Venetian glass, tinted in shades of rose, amethyst, purple, green and straw. Tradition has it that the seven arched bronze frames of the Gothic pointed windows opening into the terrace were brought from Europe by Mrs. Ringling. In any case, they are richly ornamented with designs of various forms of marine life, executed in low relief.

The hand-wrought ironwork throughout the house is intricate and delicate in character. In front of the massive carved walnut doors of the main entrance are screen doors of iron and copper. The initial R may be seen at the top of the nine-foot grilles that protect the kitchen windows on the bay side. Other patterns, in great variety, characterize those in other window embrasures, while two pairs of similarly fashioned gates are to be found in the interior.

Mrs. Ringling tried to evoke the atmosphere of Venice when she brought home a typical gondola and placed it on a tiny island not far from the terrace. She had planned to build a seawall around the island, but before that could be accomplished, a hurricane destroyed both islet and craft. Now only the bronze ornaments of the gondola, shaped like sea-horses, remain. They may be seen in the solarium.

## HER PERSONALITY LINGERS

In the expectation of many years in which to enjoy the great house she and her husband had built, Mrs. Ringling made many plans for the Ca' d' Zan. Even though she died on June 8, 1929, only three years after it was completed, she still impressed her personality on every aspect of it. Nowadays, the State of Florida maintains the Ringling Residence as nearly as possible as it was when John and Mable Ringling lived there.

Mr. Ringling expressed in his will the wish that the great palace might become a museum of Venetian art, and an attempt was made to comply with that request. However, it quickly became evident that the public was interested more especially in seeing it as a background for the life of the

circus magnate and his wife, and the plan to convert the Residence into a museum has been abandoned as impracticable. In responding to such curiosity and interest, a number of rooms that had theretofore been closed were opened in 1954 for display.

## THE INTERIOR PLAN

Passing through the main entrance doorway, the visitor finds himself in a spacious foyer leading to a vast two-and-a-half storied interior court, and to other apartments to the north and south. As in many an Italian palace, this court serves as a central and unifying architectural feature, and in this instance becomes the main living room of the house. Some thirty rooms spread out from it, with the kitchens, pantries and servants' quarters in a wing to the south. Upper floors are reached by a curving staircase and an elevator (not now in use). The private apartments are to be seen on the second and third floors.

The interior court, known as the great hall, is remarkable for its coffered ceiling of Florida pecky cypress in Renaissance style, which frames an inner skylight of colored glass. From this ceiling is suspended a glittering chandelier. A balcony with painted ceilings surrounds three sides of the hall at the second story level, and from this one gains access to the bedrooms. Squares of black and white marble, laid in checkerboard fashion, form the floors of the central and southern rooms on the first floor level.

## NOTABLE TAPESTRIES

Perhaps the most notable feature of the decorations is the many tapestries that hang on the walls. High on the west wall hang two 17th century Flemish tapestries depicting episodes in the life of Alexander the Great. The one on the left shows the Macedonian conqueror instructing his men before battle, while the one on the right shows him slaying a lion. Behind the organ console, on the south wall, may be seen an English Mortlake tapestry of the same period, adapted from a cartoon by Raphael for the *Apostle* series now in London's South Kensington Museum. The present example depicts SS. *Paul and Barnabas*, as they heal a man who has been crippled from birth (Acts XIV, 8-19). A third tapestry belonging to the Alexander series, *The Conqueror Beside a Pool*, has a place on the south balcony wall. To the right of this is hung one of a known set of six, after cartoons by Peter Paul Rubens, illustrating incidents in the heroic career of Achilles. Here we see Thetis, mother of the hero, at Vulcan's forge. As the Iliad tells us, Patroclus has been killed in the 'Trojan Wars' wearing the armor of his friend, Achilles. Thetis now receives for her son the new armor, which she has persuaded the god of fire to forge in one night. Achilles



THE BREAKFAST ROOM

will wear it when he himself is killed by Paris, wounded by a poisoned arrow, which will strike him in the heel, his one vulnerable spot. In the Ringling Museum of Art there is a small painting by Rubens for a tapestry about another incident in the same series. It shows Thetis holding her infant son by the heel as she plunges him into the River Styx in her vain attempt to make him invulnerable.

Four carved and polychromed heads of saints, German wood sculpture of the late 15th century, are placed in the spandrels of the window arches; a fifth is above the fireplace. A seated figure of Saint Gregory, South German sculpture of the same period, is seen on the organ console.

The organ itself, a very fine Aeolian instrument, said to have cost \$50,000, can make the whole Residence resound with its rich and sonorous tones. Its many hundreds of pipes are concealed behind the tapestries, in the balcony walls. Played electrically as well as manually, the organ was a constant source of pleasure to Mr. Ringling, who shared his family's delight in music, and an ability to play easily on many instruments. Often now his favorite selections are played for the visitors.



THE STATE DINING ROOM

A great stone chimney-piece in Italian Renaissance style dominates the north wall of the great hall. Much of the furniture in this room, as in many of the others, was purchased by Mr. Ringling from the Astor and Gould collections. It belongs, for the most part, to the last decades of the 19th century when the high eclectic taste of the time demanded the most sumptuous reproductions of the great historic styles of the past. Thus, reflections of the Italian and French Renaissance, as well as of the periods of Louis XIV, XV and XVI in France, are plentifully represented throughout the Residence. Two French *dressoirs* or cabinets, of walnut, in the style of the early 16th century, flank the fireplace. On one may be seen reliefs showing the *Crucifixion*, the *Flagellation*, *Christ before Pilate*, and the *Road to Calvary*; and on various mythological subjects, including the *Judgment of Paris* and the *Death of Thisbe*. The *dressoirs*, as well as the large French Gothic chest at the southwest corner of the room, were formerly in the Gavet Collection. On them, two bishop saints, in carved and gilded wood of South German origin, writhe in the dramatic fashion of the Baroque period.

The breakfast room is entered through a low pair of elegantly wrought iron gates at the southwest corner of the great hall. It was used by the Ringlings when they dined *en famille*. At the long, carved oak table, they and their guests could sit in the tall-backed chairs, and look out across the noble terrace to the bay. Green-covered cushions lay on the floor, to protect thin-clad feet from the chill of the marble. Paintings from the collection the Ringlings were making hung on the wall. Other objects of art enlivened the room.

## THE BALLROOM

A logical tour of the Ca' d' Zan leads us back across the great hall, with its expansive view of Sarasota Bay, to the golden magnificence of the ballroom. A rich yellow brocade enhances the copper gold of the coffered ceiling painted by Willy Pogany, in which dances of the different nations of the world are pictured. The bright colors of the national costumes add gaiety to the general decorative scheme; and an allusion to a popular dance of the time is made in the southwest corner—one of four depicting the history of American dance. Tall gilded *torchères* furnish light. The piano is a German Steinway in a handsome rosewood and ormolu case signed by Mellier. Nearby stands an Italian decorated harpsichord case, dated 1652. On the walls are framed decorations of the 18th century, representing play-



THE BALLROOM

ing *putti*, and a painting, "Berenice," by the 17th century Venetian, Gregorio Lazzarini.

A watercolor portrait of Mable Ringling at the Opera, by Savely Sorine, Russian-American portrayer of the fashionable world of the 20's, beckons from the adjacent room. It faces a portrait of John Ringling, by the same artist, at the far end of the foyer. Against the north wall stands a richly wrought coin cabinet in the style of Louis XV, after one designed by Schlodtz, dated 1739, now in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris. Four Italian Directoire chairs in white and gold, at one time in use on the Ringling houseboat, *Zalophus*, are also exhibited here. Between the windows is a portrait of Sophie Dorothea, Princess of Great Britain, by Antoine Pesne. On the same wall hangs a small collection of Biedermeier greeting cards, produced in Vienna in the early part of the 19th century. The floors of both the ballroom and the reception room are of Indian teak.

## THE SOLARIUM

From the northeast corner of the reception room opens through gilded carved doors into the solarium. The walls of the solarium were originally decorated in the style of Pompeian frescoes, and its floors are of Georgia marble. A Carrara marble bust of Clarice Orsini, wife of Lorenzo the Magnificent, still remains.

Gilded columns frame the archway leading back to the entrance foyer, above which the ceiling beams enclose areas of canvas painted with conventionalized foliated motifs in red and grey. That decoration, as well as others on walls or ceilings of the state diningroom, the great hall, John Ringling's bedroom and one of the guestrooms, were created by Robert Webb. Against other columns of Mexican onyx in the foyer stand state chairs of gilded wood in the style of Louis XV, thought to have come from the New York mansion of Jay Gould. Two carved and gilded *cassone*, or dower chests, in Florentine Renaissance style, with painted scenes, flank the entrance.

## THE STATE DINING ROOM

Walnut makes the rich paneling of the dining room, with refectory table and chairs of the same wood in Italian Renaissance style. Against this dark background, the red embroidered velvet of the chairs and the damask of the draperies are contrasted. Over an ornate gilded console of the late 19th century hangs a painting, *The Crowded Marketplace*, by the late 18th century Italian, Giovanni Michele Graneri. The fireplace, of carved stone is a copy of an Italian Renaissance model. Over it is suspend-



THE BAR

ed a glazed terra cotta tondo of the *Virgin Adoring the Child*, in the manner of Andrea della Robbia, Florentine sculptor of the 15th century.

A pedimented door at the far corner of the dining room leads to a short passage where one turns left to the bar lounge. This intimate room, with the leaded glass wall-panels and bar, once formed part of the famous Cicardi Winter Palace Restaurant in St. Louis, a favorite haunt of Mr. Ringling's. From the ceiling hangs a German *Lusterweibchen*, or chandelier, in the form of a polychromed mermaid, balanced on a pair of antlers, from the Bondy Collection in Vienna. She holds a shield bearing a coat of arms and the date 1665. A few of the remaining bottles from the cellars of the first Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York may be seen here. These were among those purchased by Mr. Ringling when the hotel was demolished to make room for the Empire State Building.

Continuing back along the passage, the first door at the left leads to the pantries, where a portion of the Ringling silver and china is displayed in cases and cupboards. Here too, in a glass case, is a scale model of the *Zalophus*, which was wrecked on a sandbar in 1930. Beyond the larger pantry lies the ample kitchen with its massive range and extensive refrigeration system.

Another part of the same passage, on the right of which is seen a tapestry with the *Burning of Troy* as its subject, returns the visitor to the



JOHN RINGLING'S BEDROOM

staircase area. The entrance to the elevator is marked by a carved stone door-frame in Florentine Renaissance style, surmounted by a frescoed lunette depicting the Madonna and Child with two angels. Winding around the elevator shaft, steps of Carrara marble with balusters of Siena marble lead to the second floor of the Residence, past a small flight that branches off to Mr. Ringling's private office.

## JOHN RINGLING'S BEDROOM

Immediately to the right from the top of the stairs is the entrance to the apartments of John Ringling. His bedroom is decorated in French Empire style, with gilded enframements of doors and windows. On its ceiling is an oval painted decoration of the late 19th century with a mythological subject, and the floor is of black veined marble. The suite of furniture, in the revived Empire style of Napoleon III, is of rosewood, heavily encrusted with gilded bronze ornamentation. An open loggia toward the east affords a dramatic view of the romantic approach to the Residence, and a book-lined alcove opposite offers a magnificent view of Sarasota Bay. Between the beds hangs a small portrait of Jacopo di Lusignan, a 15th century King of Cyprus, husband of that Caterina Cornaro in whose honor the tiny Asolo Theater (now part of the Ringling Museum of Art) was built near Venice in 1798.



JOHN RINGLING'S OFFICE

Through an open door in one corner of John Ringling's bedroom, one looks into a closet where a portion of his wardrobe may be seen. The clothes still bear witness to his reputation as one of America's most nattily dressed public figures. Coats, suits and trousers hang at one side. On the other are dozens of figured silk ties. Hats and shoes are arranged on the shelves.

## AN ORNATE BATH

From the opposite corner of the bedroom, a door opens into the bath. Here, the walls are veneered in yellow Siena marble, and the tub is hewn out of a solid block of the same stone. Some of the fixtures are gold-plated. At the left may be seen Mr. Ringling's barber-chair, in which he was accustomed to being shaved. This originally stood in the bedroom.

The visitor now retraces his steps and enters the bedroom of Mable Ringling, through a doorway at the right. Her suite of furniture is of inlaid sandalwood with ormolu mounts, in the style of Louis XV as it was re-created at the end of the 19th century, when the curvilinear Rococo forms were once again revived. The pillow-covers were fashioned by Mrs. Ringling herself out of bits of Venetian, Irish, Brussels and other laces she



MABLE RINGLING'S BEDROOM

had collected on her travels. One of her favorite fans, a rose point, is exhibited in a glass case.

This bedroom connects with a small bath-dressing room enriched with delicate painted decoration. Cupboards with mirror doors hold Mrs. Ringling's monogrammed linens.

## THE SECOND MRS. RINGLING'S BEDROOM

Emily Haag Buck Ringling chose the adjoining bedroom when she came to live in the Residence. Its suite of furniture in grey lacquered wood, elaborately carved in Rococo style, is typical of the taste of some of the great American houses in the closing years of the 19th century. A door here is ornamented with a painted panel of exotic design.

Passing through the door in the west wall, the visitor finds himself on the interior balcony. This is a convenient point of vantage from which to study the proportions and appurtenances of the great hall spread out below. Then turning to the right, he may enter, at the end of the passage, a small hall paved with Spanish tile that gives access to two of the guest rooms.



THE ROSE GARDEN

The one at the right looks out over the approach to the Residence, and reflects in its furnishings the predilection for the revived Louis XV and Louis XVI styles so common at the turn of the century. Beyond a luxurious adjacent guestroom, connected *en suite* with the first, is a third, which is now a small gallery used for displaying objects of art from the Gavet Collection. This collection was dispersed in Paris in 1902, and later acquired in part by Mr. Ringling from Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont of Newport, R. I. Included in the exhibits in this gallery are jeweled watches and wax miniatures of the 16th century, antique engraved stones, glazed terra cotta, Hispano-Moresque faience, and *verre eglomisé*. This room, epitomizing the taste of the typical collector of the last decades of the 19th century, serves as a barometer of that comparable taste, eclectic in the extreme, which was the inheritance of John Ringling.

One more guest room, at the end of the north balcony and facing the bay, may be viewed by the visitor before he retraces his steps to the south side of the balcony. The lacquered furniture here is in 18th century Venetian style.



CENTRAL MOTIF OF GAMING ROOM CEILING  
John and Mable Ringling in Costume

## JOHN RINGLING'S OFFICE

John Ringling's office and an anteroom may be approached through a door that opens onto the balcony. Cases in the anteroom hold personal mementoes such as epaulettes that indicate Ringling's prominence in the Masonic order; a meerschaum cigar-holder carved with portraits of the seven famous brothers; and scores of railroad passes for virtually all roads in the United States. Beyond, in the office where Mr. Ringling was accustomed to work, his inlaid desk and generously-proportioned chair are still placed facing the bay. His embossed silver telephone stands on the desk. On the wall are portraits of himself and his brothers, and one of his favorite paintings— depicting a small boy reading a circus herald. In a large revolving bookcase nearby are a number of books he liked to have close at hand.

By way of the balcony, or again traversing the master bedroom, the visitor returns to the main upper hall, from which a small curving stair-

case leads to the third floor. Here is a long, L-shaped room, resplendent with the excitement and color of a Venetian festival. On the ceiling above the gaming tables Pogany gave full vent to his imagination. Portraits of John and Mable Ringling, in costume, form a focus for other dancing couples, figures in masks and regalia suggesting the characters of the *Commedia dell' Arte*, festive gondolas, gaily decked balconies, and other aspects of carnival time in Venice. Near the door, the artist himself cavorts gleefully, pail and brush in hand.

## A SUPERB VIEW

Now is perhaps the time to walk around the north end of the Residence and onto the terrace, and to rest there for a few minutes. You may look down the bay to the long causeway John Ringling built and gave to the city, across to St. Armands Key where he once planned a million dollar development, and to the basilica-like ruins of his projected Ritz-Carlton Hotel, on Longboat Key.

Long seawalls, built by the State in 1952, stretch away north and south. They replace those built by John Ringling when he first acquired the property, which had crumbled into ruin and were no longer strong enough to offer sufficient protection from encroachment by wind-driven water. With the old seawall went the projection that once enclosed a "terrapin crawl," for turtles that were to make one of John Ringling's favorite dishes. But the visitor may walk on toward the south, as the circus man once walked, along the edge of the bay to the boundaries of his property. At a little distance from the Residence, a stone table and seats have been set up near the water, beneath a widespreading tree, where guests may relax.

## THE SWIMMING POOL

Returning to the horseshoe-shaped lawn before the main entrance, one finds a rectangular swimming pool, 65 feet long and 26 feet wide, where the Ringlings and their guests once refreshed themselves on warm days. Steps lead to a shallow wading pool at the west end, and others go into the pool itself, which increases gradually to the depth of nine feet. A four-foot tiled walk parallels the edges of the pool, and a curving marble seat, in the center of which stands a copy of the Medici Venus, echoes a semi-circular extension at one side. White marble was used for the entire structure, with colored tiles to add a decorative note. The old Persian and Italian tiles on the diving platform and along the marble seat are of special interest.

A hundred yards to the north, you come to one of the two formal gardens on the estate. Groups of figures in rustic costumes, after 18th century models, accent the four corners of the parterre, and a short path leading to the bay is guarded on either side by grotesque stone figures such as are placed at intervals around the edge.

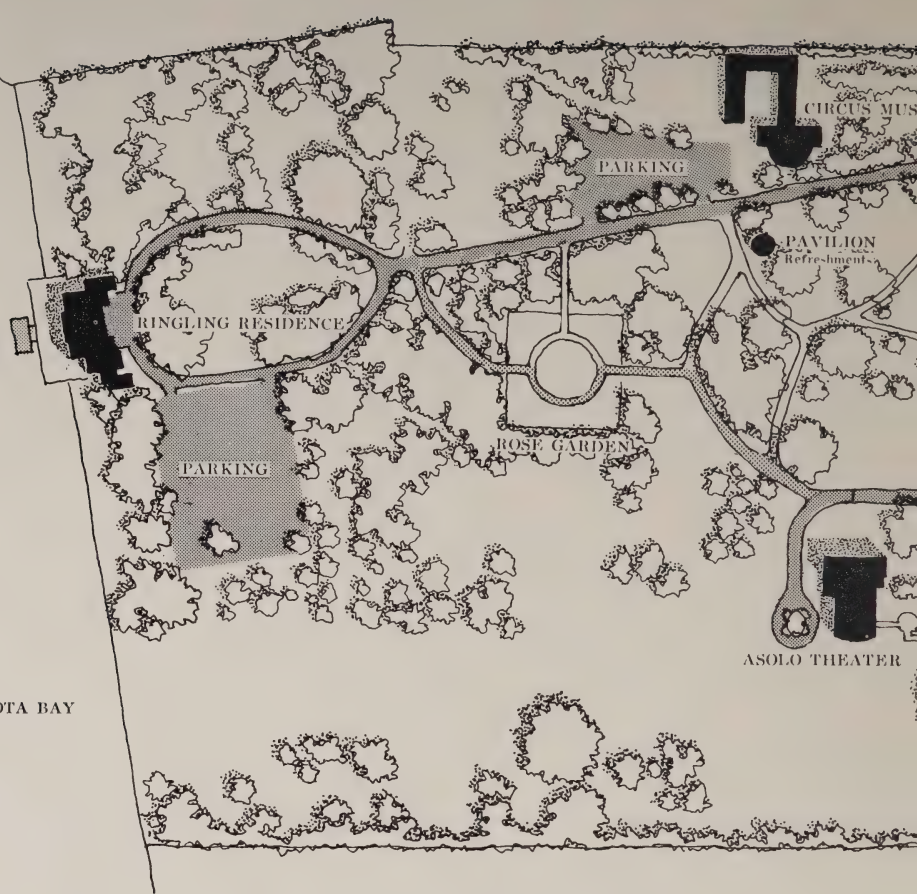
From the far side of the great lawn, a sign at a side road points the sculpture-lined way to Mable Ringling's rose garden. The central feature of that formal planting is a small circular temple surmounted by a wrought-iron latticed dome. From this, geometrically defined beds radiate outward toward square boundaries marked by a row of truncated columns. Accents are furnished by stone pastoral groups and *putti*.

From the rose garden, the visitor curves back onto the main drive, and leaves the grounds by a new exit at the south-east corner, near the Museum of Art.

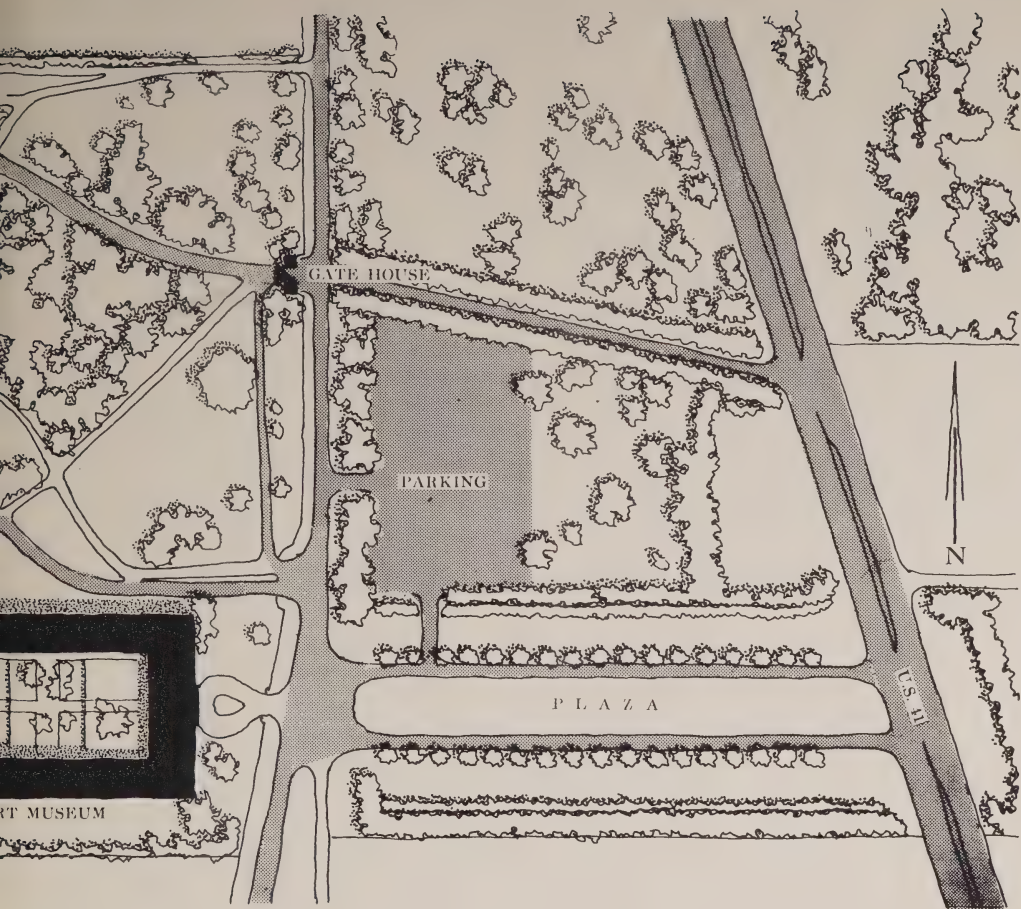
The Venetian palace John and Mable Ringling built was one of the most luxurious houses in all Florida. It might have remained only that—a rich man's house built for personal gratification— nothing more. By making it a part of his magnificent legacy to the people of his adopted state, John Ringling not only created another significant memorial to his wife and himself but also established a fitting complement to the great art museum in which he had housed his resplendent collection of paintings.







SARASOTA BAY









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